



Cilly Cliffs Multiple Timber Sale Project Newsletter

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Swan River State Forest's first newsletter for the proposed Cilly Cliffs Multiple Timber Sale Project. In this newsletter we would like to highlight our project objectives, update you on project development since the scoping period, introduce the Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) and decisionmaker, summarize issues that were identified during the scoping period, and inform you of further opportunities to comment on the project.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Project Objectives

- promote biodiversity by moving forest stands toward historic cover type conditions and species composition;
- improve forest health and productivity by addressing insect and disease issues;
- generate revenue to the Common Schools trust for funding Kindergarten through grade 12 public education and to benefit local economies;
- contribute sufficient volume towards DNRC's annual sustained yield target of 57.6 Million board feet (MMbf) as required by state law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) while incorporating and meeting important ecological commitments;
- develop and improve the transportation system and infrastructure for long-term management, fire suppression, and public access;

- improve water quality by removing and rehabilitating sediment point sources, and meet *Best Management Practices* (BMPs) on all project roads, including haul routes to Highway 83; and
- reduce fuel loads and wildfire hazards by decreasing ground and ladder fuel loads.

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ID Team

Under the guidance of the *Montana Environmental Policy Act* (MEPA, MCA 75-1-201), DNRC uses an interdisciplinary approach when planning timber sale projects and analyzing potential effects of these projects on the natural and human environments. During the initial stages of project development, DNRC formed the Cilly Cliffs ID Team. The ID Team consists of several resource specialists trained in various disciplines that are closely related to a project under consideration. The ID Team assists with determining relevant issues, the development of project alternatives, assesses both the existing environment that may be affected by the project and the potential impacts of each alternative, and recommends measures to avoid or mitigate impacts of the proposed alternatives.

ID Team Members

SWAN RIVER STATE FOREST – Dan Roberson Unit Manager, Decisionmaker; Jason Parke, Management Forester, Project Leader

NORTHWESTERN LAND OFFICE – Tony Nelson, Hydrologist; Leah Breidinger and Chris Forristal, Wildlife Biologists

FOREST MANAGEMENT BUREAU – Jeff Schmalenberg, Soil Scientist; Jim Bower, Fisheries Biologist; Jordan Larson, Resource Economist; Tim Spoelma, Silviculturalist; and Amy Helena, Forest Management Planner

Public Scoping

Beginning February 5, 2013, DNRC conducted a 30-day initial scoping process for the Cilly Cliffs Multiple Timber Sale Project. We received input by letter, email, and/or phone contact from 3 individuals, 2 organizations, and 4 government agencies.

Issue Development

After reviewing the responses received during the public scoping period, the ID Team identified 85 issues. The ID Team determined which issues would be analyzed in detail or eliminated from further analysis. The issues to be analyzed in detail were determined to be relevant and within the scope of the project and, therefore, would be included in the impacts analysis. Issues that were eliminated from further analysis were determined to be beyond the scope of the project.

The ID Team developed the following issue statements that will guide the analysis for each individual resource and the development of the alternatives associated with this project.



Vegetation

- The proposed activities may affect forest cover types through species removal or changes in species composition.
- The proposed activities may affect age classes through tree removal.
- The proposed activities may affect forest old-growth amounts and quality through tree removal.
- The proposed activities may affect patch size and shape through tree removal.
- The proposed activities may affect forest fragmentation through tree removal.
- The proposed activities may affect forest stand vigor through tree removal.
- The proposed activities may affect forest stand structure through tree removal.
- The proposed activities may affect forest crown cover through tree removal.
- The proposed activities may affect forest insect and disease levels through tree removal (both suppressed/stressed and infested/infected).
- The proposed activities may affect forest fire conditions, levels, and hazards through tree removal, increased public access, and/or fuel reduction.
- The proposed activities may affect sensitive plant populations through ground disturbance.
- The proposed activities may affect noxious weeds through ground disturbance.

Watershed and Hydrology

- The proposed activities have the potential to increase water yield, which in turn, may affect erosive power, in-stream sediment production, and stream-channel stability.
- The proposed activities may increase sediment delivery into streams/lakes and affect water quality.
- The proposed activities may adversely affect water quality by reducing shade and increasing stream temperature.

Fisheries

- The proposed activities may affect fish populations' presence and genetics.
- The proposed activities may affect fish habitat by modifying flow regime.
- The proposed activities may affect fish habitat by modifying sediments.
- The proposed activities may affect fish habitat by modifying channel forms.
- The proposed activities may affect fish habitat by modifying riparian function.
- The proposed activities may affect fish habitat by modifying amounts of large woody debris.
- The proposed activities may affect fish habitat by modifying stream temperature.
- The proposed activities may affect fish habitat by modifying stream nutrients.
- The proposed activities may affect fish habitat by modifying stream connectivity.

Wildlife

- The proposed activities could result in changes in the distribution of different cover types on the landscape which could affect wildlife.
- The proposed activities could alter the representation of stand age classes on the landscape which could affect wildlife.
- The proposed activities could affect wildlife species associated with old-growth forests.
- The proposed activities could result in disturbance or alteration of forested corridors and connectivity, which could inhibit wildlife movements.
- The proposed activities could reduce forested cover which could adversely affect habitat linkage for wildlife.
- The proposed activities could result in changes in patch size and shape which could affect wildlife.
- The proposed activities could result in fragmentation of interior forest habitat.
- The proposed activities could reduce the number and distribution of snags, which are an important component of wildlife habitat.
- The proposed activities could reduce levels of coarse woody debris, which is an important component of wildlife habitat.
- The proposed activities result in the alteration of suitable lynx denning and foraging habitats, rendering them unsuitable for supporting lynx.
- The proposed activities could reduce bald eagle nesting and perching habitats and/or disturb nesting bald eagles.
- The proposed activities could result in disturbance of wolves at denning or



rendezvous sites, which could lead to pup abandonment and/or increased risk of mortality.

- The proposed activities could result in reduced habitat quality on winter range for white-tailed deer and elk, which could lead to reduced prey availability and reduce the potential for the area to support a wolf pack.
- The proposed activities could result in increased human disturbance and potential for wolf-human conflicts that could alter wolf use of suitable habitats.
- The proposed activities could result in reduction of hiding cover important for grizzly bears, which could result in: 1) increased displacement of grizzly bears, 2) avoidance of otherwise suitable habitat, and or 3) increased risk of bear-human conflicts.
- The proposed activities could result in an increase in density of roads, which could result in increased displacement of grizzly bears and increased risk of bear-human conflicts.
- The proposed activities could result in a decrease in secure areas for grizzly bears, which could result in increased displacement of grizzly bears.
- The proposed activities could reduce the amount and/or quality of fisher habitats, which could alter fisher use of the area.
- The proposed activities could alter the structure of flammulated owl preferred habitat types, which could reduce habitat suitability for flammulated owls.
- The proposed activities could result in increased human disturbance that could alter wolverine use of suitable habitat.

- The proposed activities could reduce suitable nesting and foraging habitat for pileated woodpeckers, which could alter pileated woodpecker use of the area.
- The proposed activities could remove forest cover on important winter ranges, which could lower their capacity to support white-tailed deer and elk.
- The proposed activities could remove elk security cover, which could affect hunter opportunity and local quality of recreational hunting.

Geology and Soils

- The proposed activities have the potential to compact and displace surface soils which reduces hydrologic function, macroporosity, soil function.
- The proposed activities have the potential to increase erosion of productive surface soils off-site.
- The proposed activities may cumulatively affect long-term soil productivity.
- The proposed activities have the potential to increase slope instability through increased water yields, road surface drainage concentration, and exceedence of resisting forces.
- The proposed activities may remove large volumes of both coarse and fine woody material through timber harvest and may reduce the amount of organic matter and nutrients available for nutrient cycling possibly affecting the long-term productivity of the site.

Economics

- The proposed activities may have economic impacts associated with generating revenue for the trust beneficiaries.
- The proposed activities may have economic impacts associated with creating timber-related employment and stimulating the local economy.
- The proposed activities may have economic impacts associated with non-market issues within the area.

Air Quality

- The proposed activities may adversely affect local air quality through dust produced from harvest activities, road building and maintenance, and hauling.
- The proposed activities may adversely affect local air quality through smoke produced from logging slash pile and prescribed burning.

Recreation

- The proposed activities may affect public motorized use, non-motorized uses, and hunting.
- The proposed activities may affect the revenue generated by recreational uses.

Aesthetics

- The proposed activities may adversely affect local viewsheds and scenic vistas.
- The proposed activities may increase local noise levels.

Cultural Resources

- The proposed activities may affect local cultural resources.



Public Field Tour

The ID Team would like to gauge the amount of interest in a public field tour. Tentatively the date has been scheduled for early August. If you are interested in attending a field tour, please notify us via the contact information listed below. If you have a specific concern that you would like to see covered on the tour, please indicate that as well.

Field Reconnaissance

The ID Team will be visiting the project area this summer to accurately assess the condition of resources that may be affected by the proposed project. Such assessments are critical in further identifying and describing potential issues, developing a range of reasonable alternatives, describing potential environmental consequences on the affected resources, and developing appropriate measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts of the proposed action. The types of information collected during field evaluations include, but are not limited to:

- Assessing presence or absence of fish species in streams in the project area.
- Assessing the presence of old-growth forest.
- Identifying historic skid trails in previous harvest units to assess cumulative impacts on the soils resource.
- Ground-truthing the potential transportation plan and harvesting systems.
- Identifying routes of connectivity important to various terrestrial species in the project area.
- Assessing insect and disease risks to stands in the project area.
- Filling out stand reconnaissance sheets for individual stands and recommending silvicultural prescriptions.
- Identifying sediment-point sources that are affecting, or could affect, water quality in the project area.

The objectives of this project are to promote biodiversity, improve forest health, generate revenue for the school trust, contribute volume toward DNRC's annual sustainable yield, reduce fuel loads and wildfire hazards, and improve water.

DID YOU KNOW.....

Under the direction of the State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board), the Department manages timber, surface, and mineral resources on Sate trust lands for the benefit of the common schools and other endowed institutions in Montana. The Land Board consists of Montana's 5 top elected officials: Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Secretary of State, Attorney General, and Sate Auditor.

Project Changes

The initial proposal included the following section in the project area, which covered approximately 18,850 acres: Section 3, Township 23 North, Range 17 West; and Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36, Township 24 North, Range 17 West.

Currently, the following sections have been removed from the project area after further review: Sections 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 32, 35, and 36, Township 24 North, Range 17 West (the cross-hatched area in **FIGURE 1**, page 9). This change has reduced the project area size down to approximately 12,555 acres. As previously mentioned in the initial proposal, harvesting would actually occur on only a portion of those acres (approximately 20 percent or less).

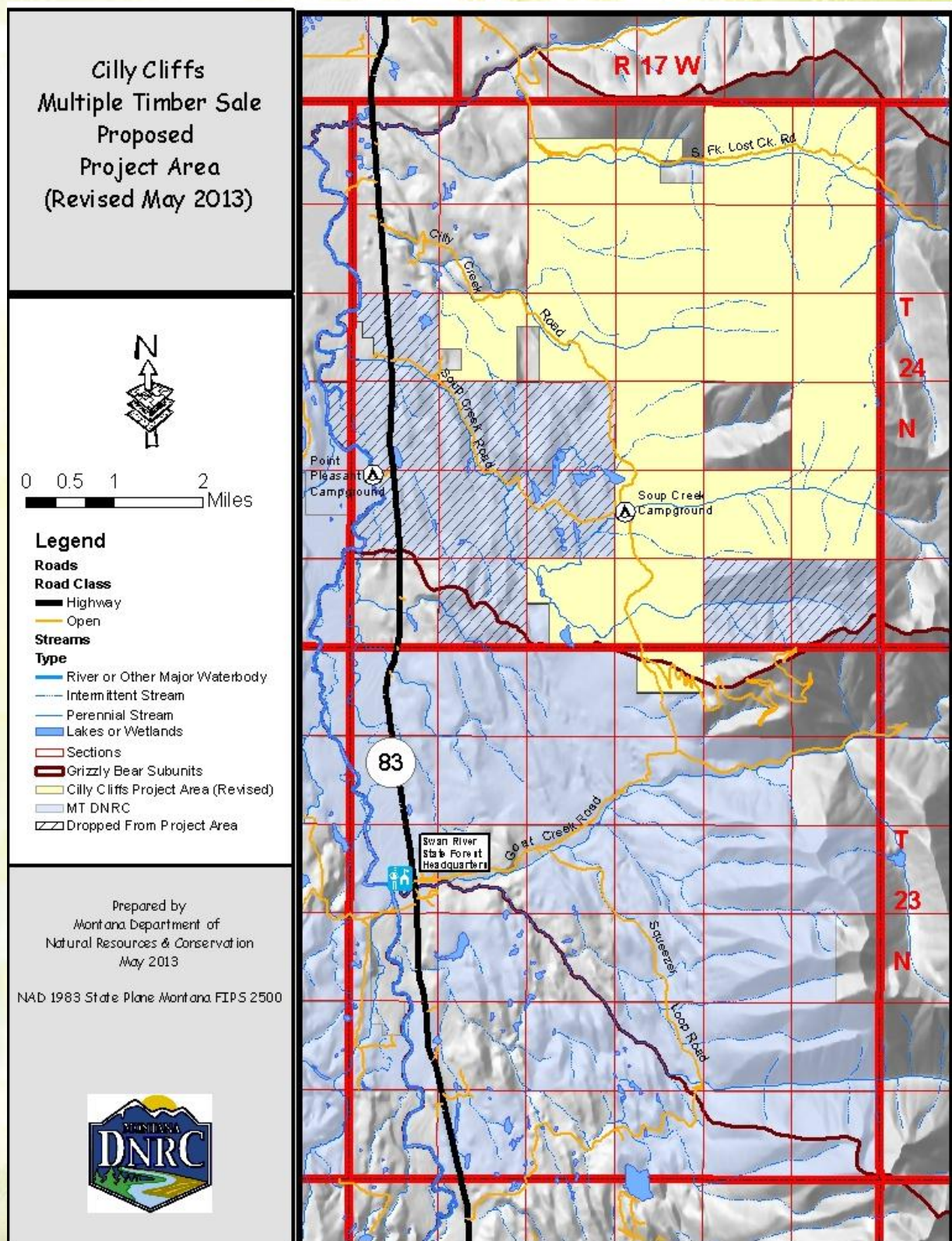
Project Timeline

The following dates display the Cilly Cliffs Multiple Timber Sale Project Timeline. Although the ID Team has specified particular times and methods for public input, public input is not limited to these times; the ID Team accepts comments throughout the development of the project.

Cilly Cliffs Multiple Timber Sale Project Time Line

- Public Scoping – February 5 to March 7, 2013
- ID Team Established – March 2013
- Issue Development – Spring 2013 (and ongoing)
- Newsletter #1 – June 1, 2013
- Public Field Tour – August 2013
- Alternatives Developed – Fall 2013
- Environmental Analysis and writing draft EIS – Fall 2013 and Winter 2014
- Newsletter #2 – Fall 2013
- Draft EIS Internal Review – Winter/Spring 2014
- Draft EIS Public Review – Spring 2014
- Final EIS Published – Summer 2014
- Record of Decision – Fall 2014

FIGURE 1



Where Are We Now?

At this stage in developing the project, the project leader is working on field reconnaissance of the project area. The project leader is working to compile a list of potential stands within the project area to be reviewed by the ID Team in order to gain an understanding of the existing conditions of the resources in the project area. This understanding, combined with the identification of issues presented internally and by the public, enables the ID Team to begin developing alternatives.

Alternative development will include a full description of a no-action alternative (current conditions) and a reasonable range of action alternatives. The no-action alternative will serve as a baseline against which the action alternatives will be compared. Prescriptions for stands, transportation plans, and mitigation measures will be developed by the ID Team for each action alternative.

Opportunities for Public Input

The ID Team will strive to provide the public ample opportunity to comment during this project. If you wish to participate, the following opportunities should be considered:

- If you did not comment during the initial scoping period and have issues additional to those listed under *Issue Development* (page 3), send your comments to the Contact Information, page 11.
- If you would like future mailings regarding this project and have not previously contacted us, send your name, mailing address, and a request to be included on the mailing list to Contact Information, page 11.

What's to Come....

NEWSLETTER #2 – In the fall of 2013, the ID Team will distribute another newsletter detailing the alternatives developed for this project.

DEIS – The ID Team anticipates that the DEIS will be available for public review during the spring of 2014. During this time, interested individuals will have 30 days to review and submit comments on the DEIS.

DID YOU KNOW.....

A board foot (bf) is a board of lumber that measures 12 inches wide by 12 inches long by 1 inch thick?

Mbf is an acronym for one thousand board feet; the 'M' relates to the Roman numeral 1,000. A truck load of logs carries about 4.5 Mbf. In the same token, **MMbf** is an acronym for 1,000,000 board feet.

If you would like a copy of this environmental document or its summary, please let us know by June 15, 2013, by checking the appropriate item below:

- ☐ Send me a paper copy of the environmental document
- ☐ Send me an electronic copy of the environmental document
- ☐ Send me a copy of the summary
- ☐ Let me know when the documents are available
- ☐ Remove my name from the mailing list

Please send this form to: Swan River State Forest, 34925 MT Hwy 83, Swan Lake, Montana 59911 or call this information to Jason Parke at 406-754-2301.

Contact Information

**Jason Parke, Project Leader
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